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The Need for New Strategies of Research on
The Democratisation of Communication

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Should the Democratisation of Communication Expect Any Help From Researchers

For the people attempting to establish a pattern of more participatory communication, the democratisation of communication is often a voyage into uncharted and hostile waters. All around them lie the wreckage of previous attempts which collapsed because of inexperience or were thwarted because they threatened the communication establishment. The public is, at best, sceptical. It is taken for granted that political, economic or professional elites have the right to control communication unilaterally and hand down to passive receivers their own definition of reality. Authoritarian communication is protected by a rigid tradition of ideology, the organisation of technology and the structure of the political-economic order.

The initiators of these experiences generally know little about other successful experiences and have few expert guidelines to follow. Everything must be invented anew--at least in the particular context, and every traditional presupposition about communication must be questioned and re-examined. Survival demands constant effort to build a secure space among the immediate constituency of a movement and strategies for moving out to the edge of what power elites will tolerate. They generally have to train or re-train their own personnel because existing professional training is for conventional models of communication. All of this requires constant informal reflection and more formal evaluation and social analysis.

However, many of the classical approaches to communication research have developed as a supportive tool of authoritarian communication. The invitation of academic researchers for evaluations has often led to bitterly frustrating disappointments or even a deforming influence on the fragile attempts to implement ideals. Many practitioners have developed

a deep distrust of communication researchers.

One must admit that some groups working in participatory communication have problems in understanding and administering research even under optimum conditions. However, the present paper focusses on five problem areas which communication researchers must deal with in designing theory, methods and research strategies for assisting the democratisation of communication.

1. Much policy-related research starts from the implicit premise that the felt need and popular aspiration for participatory communication is simply always present. If planners can devise a set of rationally coherent policy objectives and have the necessary political and economic support, it is possible to implement these objectives almost at will. There is not sufficient attention given to the fact that institutions of more participatory communication emerge within the structure of social movements and that these social movements arise in the context of historical, structural conditions. Both policy planning and research must look more closely at the efforts toward popular communication in the movements of lower-status urban or rural workers, in the artistic expression of enthusiasts for popular indigenous music, in various forms of political "undergrounds", or simply in the widespread indignation over the unrepresentativeness of a press or broadcasting system dominated by traditional elites. Planners place too much confidence in arbitrary external intervention and do not provide the protagonists of democratisation with adequate tools of social analysis which would help these innovators relate their efforts to a broader social process.
2. Communication theory has developed largely as an explanation of the power and effects of mass communication and does not provide adequate explanation of the factors of social change leading toward democratisation. Even the critical research tradition has been preoccupied with the rigidities

of present communication systems and has produced relatively little comparative analysis of how the process of democratisation occurs.

3. When researchers do offer models of social change and democratisation, these are often far too utopian and urge a radical revolutionary change much more rapid than the social process permits. Often this research does not throw much light on the slow, steady negotiation with reality which mass popular communication movements must engage in.
4. Much research on participatory communication still follows the conventional strategy of inviting an external research expert to gather data on audience use of media, analyse this data independently and then submit a written report to directors/managers of media with conclusions and recommendations. This overlooks the fact that in participatory systems the audience is also the owner/director and even the producer. Building a participatory communication system requires a parallel form of participatory research.
5. Developing a strong organisation of participatory research is usually a long, slow evolutionary process. Academic researchers working from the base of a university or research institute are often separated from the reality of movements of popular communication. Their primary concerns are the teaching of upwardly mobile middle-class students, the interests of academic colleagues and the development of a logical body of theory. It is easy to treat an invitation to research as one more contract to carry out as quickly as possible with superficial survey methods. People working in popular communication resent being treated as a guinea pig for the curious academic dilettante adventuring into one more "bizarre ethnic tribe in a far-off place". Researchers are more helpful when they are willing to accompany these movements in their long, slow journey and share the same deep commitment and involvement held by those working in the movement.

A) Shifting Focus From Policy Objectives to Emerging Social Process

Recent research and writing on the democratisation of communication has contributed significantly to defining policy objectives. Most of the summaries of policy include some version of the following, depending on the socio-economic-political conditions and the history of a particular country.

- a) More equitable access to the information necessary for basic human needs of health, education and personal development, occupations or for significant participation in local or national public decisions.¹
This implies information which is not only available, but usable and the socio-economic conditions to apply it.² It also implies a radical change in our concepts of information and communication, from source-oriented to user-oriented communication.³
- b) Communication systems should be reorganised to permit all sectors of the population to contribute to the pool of information that provides the basis for local or national decision-making and the basis for the allocation of resources in society.⁴ The public should also have access to the tools of media production and the technical help to make their own programming.⁵ Audiences should have the opportunity to collectively criticise, analyse and participate in the communication process from their own autonomous organisational base.⁶
- c) The mechanisms should be established for broad consensual participation in the questions of general communication policy, the organisation and management of media, decisions on media programming, and the evaluation of programming as well as other aspects of performance.⁷ A basic principle is that communication is an individual and social right and that society only delegates the execution of this right to professionals.⁸
- d) To insure accountability of political leaders and media professionals

the following kinds of measures are important:⁹

- The representative decision-making structures described in (c);
- Representative property structures, preferably beyond the simple dichotomy of private commercial or state ownership;
- The development of new concepts of public law governing information and communication systems and the legal definition of rights such as the right to participate in the public communication process;
- Forms of financing public communication which protect this from any minority monopoly interests.

e) A new public philosophy of communication (beyond Nineteenth Century libertarian and liberal social ideals) is needed which provides a better understanding of information and communication in human and social development and which defines access to information channels and public participation not just as an expediency to insure an informed and docile labour force or a "stable democracy" but as basic social rights.¹⁰

f) Finally, if the public is to exercise its basic rights and provide accountability for a social good, then education for more responsible use of the media and for participatory direction of public communications should become an integral part of basic education.¹¹

The problem with much of this discussion of democratic communication is that it remains at the fairly abstract level of long-term objectives. There is much less clarification of how these objectives are realised in specific socio-political contexts.

There is growing consensus that democratisation is rarely a simple matter of social engineering; it is part of a broader process of redistribution of social power and influence in society.¹² New communication institutions are generated by and emerge out of the juncture of historical conditions and conflicting demands in a society. More horizontal channels of communi-

cation, more participatory communication structures and the beginnings of new policy are forged within socio-political movements reacting to authoritarian control of communication. In so far as communication researchers are part of this historical process, they may contribute an element of more experienced planning and coherent direction.¹³

In virtually all societies we can observe tendencies toward the concentration of social power, and in some societies there is an immense concentration of power with a small elite controlling all central political, economic and socio-cultural functions. But in the same societies we can observe the simultaneous contrary reactive movements and proposals for redistribution of social power and more participatory communication.¹⁴

There is a long tradition of communication research which analyses the factors within a given society that are contributing to concentration of power over communication networks: the studies of concentration of economic control over the press and other media; analysis of dominant ideologies in news, drama and other programming; the unfavourable presentation of minorities and other less powerful groups in the media; the many studies of forms of cultural imperialism and multinational control of media products. The school of critical research has been developing progressively better conceptual and methodological tools for analysing how dominant socio-political coalitions influence the structure and content of media.¹⁵ Critical research has also exploded many of the myths of freedom and access held by the libertarian and social responsibility traditions of communication philosophy.¹⁶

Critical research is important for those attempting to develop more participatory communication because it reveals the extent of the problem they face and calls attention to the danger that many of the models they are attempting to create may carry many traces of an authoritarian communication. This research is also a revelation of the inequities, the alienation and the repression that suggest the need for change.

Although critical research has contributed significantly to our understanding of hegemonic control of communications, it has given much less attention to analysing the factors leading toward redistribution of social power and democratisation.¹⁷ One reason is that resistance to participation and the co-optation or repression of popular communication is a much more frequent fact in most societies. James Halloran and others have rightly cautioned that it is difficult to generalise about critical research.¹⁸ However, there appear to be aspects of critical theory that limit its capacity to explain the democratisation of communication.

Critical theory has correctly insisted on the organic interrelatedness of all institutions in a society and the tendency for dominant coalitions to absorb and re-interpret all new symbols and institutions in terms their own drive for ideological control.¹⁹ However, this sort of analysis leads toward the inevitable conclusion all societies are a hierarchical, monolithic control system, unchanging and unchangeable. It is assumed that the mass media have virtually unlimited power to influence behaviour uniformly throughout a society. The analysis does not easily detect the alternative subcultural patterns of communication and the dissident decodings that are occurring. It tends to dismiss resistance movements as unimportant unless they are very exotic, eye-catching radical protest. Consequently, this analysis does not take seriously enough the small spaces of alternative communication at a group or local community level so that these can consolidate their ideas and grow slowly. Without intending to, perhaps, many critical studies actually revalidate the myth of the omnipotence and omniscience of hegemonic control.²⁰

As Enzenberger has pointed out, the tendency to see communication systems as an organic, monolithic whole blinds many theorists of the Left to the fact that media are much more distributive, fragmented and open to

wide use than is generally suspected.²¹ Few of these theorists would have predicted that even though the Shah of Iran had complete control of the mass media and other forms of ideological propaganda, his government would be brought down by an alternative "mass" media based on audio cassettes, photocopiers and local small-group meeting places.²² Most would have expected that only by getting control of the centralised mass-communication apparatus could a new climate of opinion have been crystallised. And, if the present Islamic government of Iran has not continued to develop the participatory infrastructure of communication, it is in part because this participatory process emerged within a popular movement and was largely a response to the logic of mobilisation within the movement in spite of the equally monolithic concept of communication latent in this form of Islamic ideology.

Secondly, the rationalistic idealism and fascination with ideological control typical of some critical theorists lead to attempts to short-circuit the process of democratisation of communication. The expectation is that if a new team of expert planners has access to the centralised economic and political power, they can reorganise communication systems along participatory lines almost at will. It is presumed that the motivation for participatory communication is always present in the masses and that this motivation only needs access to a well-planned structure of communication to blossom. This ignores the fact that democratisation of communication is necessarily part of a broader process of redistribution of political power and productive resources. The social mobilisation necessary to attain this redistribution involves building alternative channels of communication, developing a different explanation of social reality, and adaptation of media. The catalytic events, which motivate widespread participation in a movement mobilising numbers as a power base, occur in the juncture of specific historical circumstances. The demand for a participatory structure

of communication arises as part of the logic of a popular social movement, not from the logic in the mind of a planner no matter how perfect this may

A similar problem occurs in many small-scale projects to introduce participatory communication. The study by O'Sullivan and Kaplún of a large sample of participatory communication experiences in Latin America shows that once the external agents and external funding were withdrawn, most of the projects ceased to function. Many were of too short a duration to develop adequately or suffered from insufficient training of participants. The lack of a broader supportive government policy or even repression by officials was a factor. But the principal problem was that many of these efforts did not build upon an autonomous, mobilised and motivated organisation which had initiated the project under its own leadership as an integral part of its own organisational existence. Too often the project was started by external agents who saw an objective need and attempted to motivate ("conscientise") and train leaders to accept the ideas of the external agents.²³

Thirdly, critical theorists who think largely in terms of a global, organic model of social systems tend to also think of the process of social change as global and organic. They are often overly optimistic and idealist about what popular organisations can achieve in a given time span. For the theorist everything must change simultaneously and in synchronisation. In fact it is difficult to predict just what kind of institutional organisation of communication may emerge within a popular movement and in what time sequence.

In brief, critical communication theorists in Western capitalist societies have been largely concerned with explanations of why the democratisation of communication has not occurred, and they have built up strong theories of monolithic ideological control. When they do attempt to explain

how democratisation of communication takes place, instead of thinking in terms of an emergent process of social change, they tend to rely on a powerful, arbitrary external intervention which reflects many aspects of their social model of monolithic ideological control.

This analysis suggests that a theory of democratisation of communication must consider at least four central questions:

1. How dissident social organisations emerge and develop within situations of high concentration of social power and hegemonic control in a way that permits autonomous communication channels and an autonomous ideology?
2. How the institutions of participatory communication emerge within the social organisation of movements in response to the internal logic of such a movement?
3. What political-economic conditions are necessary for the survival and growth of democratic institutions once they have begun to take shape?
4. What kind of research and policy strategies can contribute to the development of democratic communications?

B) The Democratisation of Communication as a Process of Structural Change

Developing a general model of the process of democratisation of communication is difficult because there are so few explicit case studies. Much of the research on democratisation has dealt with small, isolated experiments of participation in local media. Although these experiences may be of considerable significance within a longer process of change in communication institutions, taken individually they do not have a broad enough scope or duration to indicate the major points of relation between structural change and change in communication patterns.

The best methodology may be to begin by analysing the reorganisation of communication within broad, popularly-based movements which have sought a profound redistribution of social power.²⁴ Some of the best examples of

this are the peasant agrarian movements and national liberation movements of this century out of which have developed so many new models of political, economic and socio-cultural organisation. The analysis of these major movements indicate more clearly the major parameters of a model that can then be applied to more limited scattered cases of local participation that may have only a few very indistinct elements of the model.

1. The emergence of a dissident, autonomous structure of communication

The beginnings of dissident movements are in situations where a fairly wide segment of the population has very unequal access to resources, low prestige and little chance of individual amelioration because of very asymmetrical power relations. The specific issue is frequently the sharp deterioration in the allocation of resources for the aggrieved group and a sharp increase in exploitative conditions in a period of general socio-economic improvement. For example, in a context of general agrarian modernisation, large landholders begin to expel semi-subsistence farmers from land in order to take advantage of new markets and improved technology.²⁵ Or, in a period of general prosperity, certain urban racial-ethnic groups find it more difficult to get employment. Often the key element in sparking off such a movement is that individuals or groups cannot get redress for their grievances or cannot solve economic problems through the existing vertical hierarchical structure of communication with the centres of administrative power. At a certain point there is a collective awareness that there is no solution through the existing structure of power and communication. Or they may become aware that this pattern of communication extracts information for purposes of control, but gives no significant information in return. Or there may be an awareness that the whole symbol system denigrates their identity and their social opportunities. At this point individuals and groups reject the hierarchical channels of communication and extend

horizontal channels among other aggrieved groups to pool information and to mobilise the only powerful resource the poor may have: large numbers. Usually, these horizontal relations are between equals in power and represent an essential element in democratic communication: symmetrical exchange and power relationships.²⁶

2. How the logic of popular movements demands participatory communication.

The survival of lower-status movements in the face of massive concentration of social power often depends on dissidence among elites, and the alliance of more sophisticated and powerful elite groups with lower status groups can develop into important communication channels. Because dissident urban-technical groups need a mass base, the pattern of information exchange is more likely to be symmetrical, and lower-status groups are more likely to obtain significant information and participation in decision-making at a national level. These alliances are often the beginning of the integration of communication professionals into a popular movement and the basis for participatory structures for media policy and administration.²⁷

Many of the characteristics of a democratic communication described in the section on policy objectives are evident in these movements. Access and participation are important for sustaining the cohesion of the movement because mass support is often the most important strategic resource to counterbalance the entrenched power of national elites, and participation may be the chief legitimating factor in this mass support. There is often in these movements a high value placed on the inherent right of every participant to be fully informed of decisions and to have the opportunity to be heard. New patterns of access and participation--indeed a new public philosophy of access--are embodied in the structure and ideology of these movements.

Since the network of communication in these movements develops on

the periphery of the hierarchical structure of communication, the "centre of gravity" of this alternative pattern of communication is decentralised so that there are many points of access and participation open to lower-status people. It is radically different from a system of communication controlled from above that allows some token local access. In this case, the points of input are truly at the local, lower-status level because this is where the locus of power and legitimacy lies. Lower-status leadership and constituency also jealously maintain the control of their communication channels in order to guarantee the authenticity of information. There is concern that the kind of media used permit this local control. This is an attitude quite different from the alienation of passive consumers of a distant, foreign information source, and it is the basis for a continuing active involvement in the governance of a communication system.

3. Development of an independent ideology

Most important, these movements produce a new set of central symbols that redefine the perception of reality from a lower-status perspective and form the basis of a new language.²⁸ The new language re-evaluates the identity of the lower-status people (peasants are the bearers of the true values and virtues of the nation, black is beautiful, etc.) and accentuates the positive role of this group in the development of the nation. This legitimates the participation of these sectors in national decision-making and the major re-allocation of all resources toward this group (educational opportunities, land, technical assistance, etc.). The new symbols and language cut across local and regional differences, status lines, ethnic and religious divisions and other divisions to open up new possibilities of sharing meaning and communicating on a common basis. While traditional elites tend to be internationally-oriented in their culture and outward looking, lower-status groups are much more rooted in the ecology of their residence.

This new language establishes the basis for a national culture more congruent with the resources, geography and history of this place and turns the national culture inward. This undercuts the tendency of elites to prefer linkages with international organisation and international communication and provides the authentic foundation for a policy of self-reliance and de-linking from dependence on transnational economic ties.²⁹

4. Adaptation of communication technology to participatory communication

In the practice of social action such as described here, there may emerge very innovative uses of media appropriate to the channels of communication within these movements and appropriate for the resources available. The new horizontal interaction between lower-status groups may activate the use of traditional, inexpensive "folk media", but give this a stronger social-change meaning. Perhaps more important than the technology itself are the symbol systems which define a new media language and the new social contexts which determine how these media are used.³⁰ Out of this combination develop entirely new programming formats which can be more participatory, embody kinds of news information which get at the deeper issues and foster a reflective liberating interaction with audiences. These efforts may start with very simple media such as mimeo newspapers, popular theatre, local radio or audio cassettes, but once these have taken on a different format they can evolve into a very different national information system. Sympathetic media specialists may be involved, but with the delegation of the movement itself. Professionalism and technical expertise, which so often serve to separate the media from the people, are redefined and develop in a new mould.

This general model indicates the basic relationships between a process of structural change and major objectives in the democratisation of communication. But, like many ideal types, it is extremely "optimistic"

and does not take into consideration many of the problems that movements toward democratisation have, especially in complex societies where control is exercised through very diffuse hegemonic coalitions.

- a) The general model does not consider the strategies of opposition and structural restraint or repression that small, weak movements encounter in public regulatory policy, the rigidities of political systems in the name of national security, the lack of economic resources and the fierce competitive reactions of large multinational corporations, the lack of flexibility in the technology designed to support the established structure of communication, and the ability of opposition to call upon the immense resources of international economic and political systems.
- b) The model ignores many of the internal problems that an initially "alternative" communication encounters as it gains a broader popular base, begins to establish a general cultural trend and is expected to assume more routine public service responsibilities for the larger society. There are difficult decisions regarding the best way to respond to the close imitations of commercial culture industries, the forms of co-optation, the accommodation to a broader range of tastes, the problem of sustaining an organisation with largely idealistic volunteer personnel, and the inevitable internal ideological divisions.
- c) This model ignores time perspective and implies that change is a short triumphalistic drive to success. In fact, the development of democratic communications is at best a long, slow process of advances and defeats, bitter learning experiences and working out adaptations--a process which often must be sustained over several generations.
- d) This particular model, as it stands, may be most useful for research from a post-hoc, historical perspective and less useful as a guide to solving problems which require negotiation with restraints and limitations.

The model outlines objectives within a process of social change, but says little about the mistakes that can be made along the way.

In recent years a number of studies of social movements which seek an alternative and more participatory organisation of communication, have outlined a different "natural history" which is less optimistic. In the area of the press, Dan Schiller's historical analysis of the evolution of the penny newspaper from alternative labour press to corporate conglomerates³¹ and the attempts in Peru to pass responsibility for the commercial press to popular organisations are both illustrative.³² The many studies of the transformation of rock music from the voice of a counter-culture to mass popular muzak³³ and the studies of efforts to sustain indigenous popular music in the face of multinational penetration outline clear stages of development.³⁴ Todd Gitlin's analysis of the experience of the Students for a Democratic Society movement with the media is also important.³⁵ Willard Rowland's analysis of media reform movements in the U.S. shows many of the inherent ideological and structural contradictions of attempts to at least modify public communications.³⁶ Various studies of community radio and public access channels indicate the general tendency toward co-optation by elites.³⁷ In Latin America numerous studies describe a flourishing multiplication of forms of popular communication--various types of revolutionary or alternative radio, networks of group communication and popular theatre, documentation centres and varieties of underground press.³⁸ But already many cautious observers in Latin America are in a quandary as to how the participatory nature of these experiences can be maintained once they enter into a more institutionalised stage.³⁹

Most of these studies analyse the emergence of an innovative, alternative media expression within the context of a political or cultural movement. A number of the studies explicitly link the development of new

communication patterns and new forms of media with structural or ideological changes arising within the movement. The historical process described in these case studies generally starts with a new media form as a dissident voice and ends with this media form being absorbed and redefined as part of a powerful ideological control system. The process varies according to the medium, the country or the historical period, but it is possible to reconstruct four typical stages in this evolution: 1) local, spontaneous communal expression (largely interpersonal communication); 2) adaptation of this communal expression to a medium which links many such groups but also introduces participatory characteristics in the medium; 3) growing popularity of the new cultural expression and the new medium with attempts by commercial media to imitate or co-opt this as a marketable product; 4) the expression is cut off from its local cultural base and is merged into a synthetic product capable of being marketed for mass tastes.

The value of the more "pessimistic" model is that it adds to the dimensions of long-term policy objectives and analysis of the historical process of social change a third dimension: an analysis of the mechanisms of structural restraints. The three dimensions together form a model of democratisation which combines policy objectives emerging within a process of structural change and negotiation with resistance to change. Most people trying to create a new pattern of communication must simultaneously manage these three dimensions: a clear concept of long-term, almost utopian goals, constant analysis of the historical process of which they are a part, and a realistic appraisal of the structural limitations they must face.

C) The Influence of Structural Restraints in the Stages of Movements Toward Democratic Communication

1. The Stage of Spontaneous Communal Expression

Most movements for an alternative, participatory communication

begin within the context of small, relatively dispersed groups attempting to create a free space for a new cultural expression controlled directly by participants. The significant step beyond simple interpersonal discussion is the use of a format of music, popular theatre, dance, oratory or group discussion around an audio-visual presentation. This provides a more powerful emotional, symbolic and celebratory expression. It also opens up a wide range of connotative and evocative communication which creates a transition from rational coping to performing arts and sets the stage for a broader public culture. The music, theatre or other form is a direct embodiment of dissent and goals of socio-political transformation that is characteristic of social movements. The expressive form is produced by the members of the group who are non-professionals, and the communicative technology employed is produced, owned and controlled within the group.

Communication at this level is more likely to use local, "folk" formats that express local culture and language and is more interested in fashioning symbols that are emotionally powerful for this local group. The form of communication merges with a wide variety of symbols of the life style of the group--the clothes, living conditions, economic employment meeting places, etc.

At this stage, there is little distinction between the creators and users of culture. The dream of most people working toward democratic communication is that they can somehow maintain the ecstasy and freedom of this small space of completely participatory communication. For this reason most successful systems of participatory communication try to maintain and build upon an infrastructure of small-group communication.

2. Linking Local Groups in a Regional or National Network

A critical transition for many experiences of participatory communication occurs when many local groups discover that they have similar

interests and ideals and wish to share the information, planning or artistic expression of other groups. To overcome problems of distance and time, they must move to a medium: press, tape or disc recording, video cassettes, local broadcasting, etc. However, a medium requires reproduction equipment and some expertise not only in the technical aspects of reproduction but in the typical languages and formats of the medium. It also requires some commitment to systematic information gathering and regular distribution, some judgement about how to satisfy a broader range of interests beyond the local group and the maintenance of a distribution system. At this stage, these administrative tasks are assumed by volunteers who wish to exercise leadership in a movement. But support may come from outside non-commercial organisations such as religio-civic or service groups which wish to build an alliance with this movement and closely identify with the ideals of the movement. In some cases small commercial recording studios or broadcasting stations provide the support.

In the transition from spontaneous communal expression to a medium, participatory communication immediately begins to experience a series of structural constraints. One of the most important modifications is the adaptation to the economic limitations and the marketing-distribution conventions associated with a particular medium. For example, when the popular music movement in Sweden began to establish cooperatives and small independent commercial facilities for record production in the early 1970s, they found that large music producers had established certain expectations in recorded sound that required much more sophisticated and expensive production methods (for example, blending of background music effects) than audiences expected from live performances. To compete, it was thought necessary to accept at least some of these commercial conventions.⁴¹ Independent studios also found that they could not support themselves only

with music for youth subcultures and had to engage in other "sidelines" for other subcultures or had to modify some of their music for a broader market in order to support their primary line of records. Groups of musicians who go commercial find themselves catering to tourist spots and to the demands of concert circuits.

In Latin America popular radio, the "voice of the voiceless", has attempted to support itself with selected advertising, and some dependence on advertisers inevitably develops. Even when outside non-commercial support groups, such as the church or labour unions, provide funding, these organisations are themselves caught in a network of cross alliances that can condition support. Community radio stations in various parts of the world, which are manned by volunteers and supported by direct subscriptions, find that the pressure to compete with other stations by improving the technical quality places ever greater demands for a wider range of financing that can compromise responsiveness to the basic constituency.

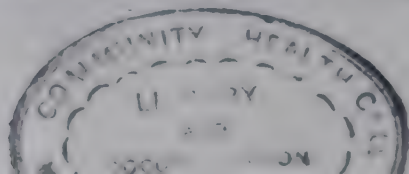
The technological and financial requirements of some media allow greater freedom. For example, small offset presses and cassette recordings make it possible for small groups to maintain control. Radio licences, however, are regulated by governments and only those recognised as having a cultural or public function can get these licences. Record reproduction (especially discs) is more costly, and groups must rely on commercial producers which can mobilise the necessary capital.

One of the most crucial aspects of this transition to a medium is the effort to adapt the direct expression of groups to the demands of the medium without losing the authenticity, originality and subjective meaning. In so far as the medium is the voice of lower-status people, it means picking up local folk expressions, the argot of neighbourhood groups and other aspects of the popular culture. The gradual adaptation of a medium

to the popular communication style can gradually generate new formats. Such adaptation may bring into use neglected technologies, cause significant modifications in existing technologies or encourage the development of new technologies. But at the same time, the images of the popular culture are modified by the underlying conventions of the medium and by the sheer physical limitations of sound, video or print reproduction. Virtually any technology that participatory communication can use already has been designed for marketing with a mass, vertical type of communication in mind. It takes an unusual amount of questioning, creativity and experimentation by groups working in participatory communication to redesign the technology for more democratic communication.

Characteristically the production for media is carried out by volunteers or by people whose commercial interests are secondary and are willing to contribute a great deal of time on a non-commercial basis. The emphasis is on getting a direct expression of the views and values of those in the movement. In some cases these movements insist on very simple inexpensive media that virtually everybody can use with a minimum of training. Often, however, volunteers cannot sustain this continued effort, especially at the level of central management. It is not always easy to find volunteers who can combine idealism with the necessary technical and managerial expertise. Translating the ideals of a movement into the language of a medium requires a great deal of sheer genius that is not always present. If not handled well, popular media can become so boring that even the most well-intentioned audiences are lost to competing media.

Few educational institutions are providing a technical training geared to popular, participatory communication. In any event, it may not be possible to provide formal training for this kind of media. Some



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networks of popular, participatory communication set up their own special training facilities directed by people who know how to combine idealism with artistic creativity. However, in order to guarantee some stable level of quality, there is danger that a sense of professional elitism gradually enters and separates the medium from the people. In societies with a highly defined class and status system, the entry of lower-status groups into work with a medium--even when it is controlled by lower-status groups--brings a loss of identification with their class background and an identification with professional media elites.

These are only a few examples of how the transition to the use of a medium can undermine the participatory characteristics of communication. If the evolution toward democratic communication is to be sustained in these movements, the following kind of measures are important:

- a) An administrative structure which preserves direct popular control or at least control through an institution with a close identification with this movement.
- b) A stable means of financing that avoids dependence on commercial income.
- c) Training of non-professional producers so that these are able to adapt the medium to their own uses and exploit all of the artistic and entertainment potential of the particular medium.
- c) A legal status that legitimises participatory communications as normative or at least as a valued alternative within the national communication system.
- e) A system of participation which can represent an increasingly pluralistic body of media users without allowing powerful minorities to dominate.
- f) A philosophy of participatory communication which clearly distinguishes

this communication system from conventional centralised communication but at the same time makes clear that participatory communication is consonant with the value traditions of a given national culture.

3. Competitive Imitation, Commercial Accommodation and Co-optation

Once a movement of alternative and participatory communication begins to gain a wider popular base, entrepreneurs see in this an interesting popular trend that offers a potential market. These entrepreneurs know how to capture the novelty, authenticity and naive creativity of a new music sound or media format and then package this in a form which is more smooth and attractive to a wide audience. Businesses also know how to win audiences with high-powered marketing techniques that creators of participatory communication abhor but are helpless to resist. Rarely are there attempts to directly suppress alternative media, but rather to develop a close competitive imitation that drives the participatory media out of the market.

Many commercial imitations begin by appealing to the same alternative dissident subculture this movement has created. Entrepreneurs will accommodate many of the images and heroes of protest in a way that appears to allow an authentic popular expression. But they will also move to isolate the more radical idealistic, politically-oriented leadership and drain from theatre, music or information its power to symbolise and motivate. The entertainment, leisure and relaxation value will be stressed. More radical views will be presented as an object of curiosity or as something people can romantically dream about but never realise. It all becomes framed as leisure activities, cut off from the hard world of productivity and pragmatic political-economic decisions. They are likely to define the innovativeness and creativity not in terms of the basic structures of power and economic relations, but change in styles, more efficient technology

or a new range of consumer objects.

Once alternative media begin to feel the competitive pressure of imitations and see their constituency attracted away by these competitors, the stage is set for co-optation. Co-optation is rarely a well-coordinated conspiracy, but a series of structural restraints that resist, coerce or channel "natural" developments. Talented writers, artists and producers who have defined themselves as non-professionals facilitating popular participation will doubt whether their efforts are worth the sacrifice. The imitations seem to be offering the same as alternative communication, but with a much larger audience. They are offered a larger stage to present their ideals, with much more professional and administrative support. The change of emphasis from the expression of the ideals of a popular movement to the expression of personal, individualistic ideals is subtle but has significant consequences.

In the same way popularly controlled cooperative media or small independent producers working with popular movements are tempted to sell out to large corporations. They lack the capital resources to grow and to compete. They expect that they will be able to serve their audiences better with more financial and managerial backing, and they will be able to attract the best talent.

The critical problem for many participatory communication movements is knowing how to grow slowly and solidly. Todd Gitlin describes how the SDS movement in the 1960s fell apart because it attempted to suddenly appeal to mass audiences instead of building more slowly.⁴² The analysis of the Swedish popular music movement in the 1970s by Wallis and Malm shows that the groups which remained alternative and retained their grass-roots qualities with more meaningful songs survived the crisis of competition with multinational music producers. These groups opted for

a gradual building up of loyal support of people who came to understand more fully the significance of authentic Swedish popular music. Over the years the use of the Swedish language in music has won out over earlier Anglo-Saxon dominance. Locally-owned resources for production have gradually increased their market, and the taste for the synthetic multinational music has waned. On the other hand, groups which tried to beat the multinational corporations at their own game by becoming more professional and technically sophisticated with appeals to a mass audience have disappeared.

4. Transculturation: The Formation of a Synthetic, Mass Culture

Many case histories of efforts toward popularly-controlled communication end their story with what might be called a final, post-mortem stage. The process of co-optation and absorption has finished its course. All organisation of popular participation has been repressed or incorporated as simply one more division of a multinational corporation. What remains are traces of the cultural elements that originated in a particular sub-cultural movement. A classical case of this is the evolution of rock music from an expression of counter-culture to the international sound of disco music.⁴⁴ In order to reach the widest possible spread of tastes, marketing specialists have fabricated a music made up of elements of many local cultural expressions but which has no ties with any spontaneous communal expression. The disturbing rough edges in rock music which were once a symbol of protest have been knocked off, and the elements which have meaning for a local subculture have been dropped.

Other case histories show that not only has the original social organisation and cultural meaning been left behind but that as the cultural element is absorbed into the ideology of dominant coalitions, the meaning is reversed. What was once a symbol of dissent and protest against elites has become a tool of ideological control. Dan Schiller's analysis of the evolution of the concept of news objectivity in nineteenth century America

is one example of this. An insistence on objectivity was originally part of the strategy of a working-class, labour press to expose elite control of the legal system and courts. But later in the nineteenth century, as newspapers became an integral part of capitalistic finance, objectivity was used as an excuse to gather news from "responsible" elite sources.⁴⁵

The importance of this stage of the analysis is to demonstrate clearly the forms of ideological control that operate against movements of more popular, democratic communication from the beginning.

D) Research Strategies for the Development of Participatory Communication

As was noted above, the difficult task of people working to build a participatory system of communication is to integrate an idealistic commitment to long-range policy objectives, a continuing analysis of the structural factors influencing their movement and response to structural constraints. In terms of the four-stage natural history of many movements toward a popularly controlled communication, the most critical stage is the transition from spontaneous communal expression to the linking of groups through a medium.

The invitation for outside research or evaluation might take various forms. The need might be for a type of feasibility study to determine what kind of medium would be best adapted for a particular type of local cultural expression and how to develop this medium within a participatory social organisation. Or a medium such as a radio station might already exist as a service to lower-status groups and the purpose of the research would be to determine how constituent groups could become more closely involved in setting policy, participating in the production of programmes and financing. In any event, the aim of research is to facilitate the development of a cooperative, participatory structure for a medium. The

researcher must work with the social movement underlying the cultural expression of local groups and must help these groups forestall the problem of competition or co-optation by dominant elites that will unfold as soon as the movement has a greater cultural influence.

1. The Importance of Participatory Historical Analysis

The major objective of the research is to strengthen the capacity for cooperative data gathering and social analysis among the groups which constitute simultaneously both the audience and the production-management body. This calls for a research strategy significantly different from conventional media studies which assume that the owners and managers of the media will make all decisions. The purpose is not to produce a report about the audience needs and uses for a separate group of media controllers so that these directors can have a greater impact on the audience but rather to involve the audience in an active process of cultural production and communication. The research activity will centre around a series of dialogues among constituent groups and between these groups and those delegated to administer the medium. The researcher is more of a group facilitator, coordinator and resource person.

The present paper has argued that the most appropriate theory for explaining the process of democratisation is a general model of how participatory communication emerges within a historical process of social change and how this process is affected by structural constraints at different stages of its development. A research strategy must therefore attempt to operationalise in a participatory manner a type of historical analysis. Thus, an initial purpose of the dialogues mentioned above is to strengthen among constituent groups a deeper awareness of their role as protagonists of a historical process. Among people accustomed to passive reception of pre-determined mass media messages it is important to develop a sense

of their own distinct cultural identity and their capacity for making cultural history. If they are to participate in a communication system, they must be convinced that they have something to say that is not only valuable in itself but important for the development of action in the community and/or nation.

This borrows very much from the concepts and methods of the Freirian "conscientización". One of the most important initial approaches is to help people reconstruct the history of their community and region, detect who have been the major actors in this history, pick out the critical turning points and analyse the cultural, economic and political influences in their lives. The participants can begin to contrast the accepted historical interpretation and their own deeply felt perspective. They can begin to contrast how it has actually happened and how it could have happened.

This process begins to reveal the talents and key cultural expressions they want to communicate. They see the powerful symbols and communication formats they can use in producing for a medium.

This strategy is very much different from the functionalist approach which starts with the scientist's own model of social or psychological behaviour and gathers data for the purpose of prediction and control of audience behaviour. The emphasis is on the awareness of the subjective meaning and organisation of reality for purposes of greater self-determination.

Secondly, this historical analysis directs attention to the interrelation of the factors which have contributed to a particular historical outcome and different critical turns of history. It suggests who the powerful actors are and what are the structural constraints imposed by existing political, economic and cultural conditions.

Again, this is different from the statistical, cross-sectional

survey which uses as the unit of analysis individual values, attitudes or action preferences. This approach atomises social facts and either spreads them out in a relatively meaningless quantitative description or aggregates them in terms of a social-psychological construct that has little relation to the historical events. This prescind from the real historical inter-relation of events and the structural conditions which are determining the limits for free choices.

Thirdly, the analysis of the interrelation of events and the process of collective decisions that led to an historical outcome indicates the existing channels of information and lack of information. The analysis of power structure indicates the structure of communication channels and how various types of information flow within these channels. It may indicate, for example, the centralisation of channels of information and the processes by which powerful elites extract information from dependent groups, pass this information to centralised ideological control groups and then releases a reformulated information through a structure of intermediaries. This hierarchical structure of intermediaries filters out all of the information which might be significant for helping lower-status groups control outcomes.

Participants also begin to be aware of their horizontal channels of communication as well as their own "language" and significant symbols. All this is then consciously available to be picked up and expressed in a medium controlled by these participants. An awareness of the structural constraints may point to the need for an independent economic base for the medium (or adapting the choice of a medium to their financial possibilities), and the importance of strategies for gaining juridical, governmental legitimation to support this independence. The analysis will also suggest what kind of communication technology will permit participatory control and how

they should (or should not) use available professional technical competence.

Fourthly, these dialogues should reveal the sometimes striking differences of interest and different ways of expressing idealistic objectives within the groups. But the interchanges also set in motion a process of negotiation and attempts to codify a common vision. This definition clarifies who can function as part of this network and helps to avoid a heterogeneous pluralism that might eventually tear the movement apart.

Fifthly, participatory research should help all involved to see the disjunction between idealistic models for an alternative participatory communication and the actual implementation of this model. Most have never experienced anything but vertical, authoritarian models and they will be influenced by all of the structural constraints of political power, technology, problems of financing and audience expectations which will tend to force them back into the model of conventional communication systems. It is especially important that the technical personnel responsible for managing a medium participate in these dialogues because many may bring with them a very conventional training and concept of how media should be run. It is important that participants understand well the particular characteristics of a medium and how they can translate their more direct interpersonal communication into the language of this medium.

Finally, the very act of constituting a participatory networking medium implies a commitment to a public action with important social change consequences. The constituent groups working with a medium thus become a major actor on the stage of change. To play this role adequately requires a sense of the historical junctures that will influence future history. One of the major advantages of this kind of historical analysis is that participants gain a kind of "map" of the socio-political process in which they are living and a clearer idea of how and when they should act

within this process.

2. Research Support in the Face of Competing Commercial Imitations and Pressures Toward Co-Optation

Most reports of relatively successful experience of participatory communication show that these movements have been able to grow even in the face of various restraints primarily because they have resolutely maintained their identity as alternative, participatory and volunteer movements.⁴⁵ At the same time, successful movements have skillfully avoided domination of the network by any one extremist group and have have gained a deeper sense of their own ideological identity by continual dialogue among the groups. They have steadily improved their technical competence but more in the direction of developing a language to express their particular values and symbols than by expensive, sophisticated techniques. They have thus stayed close to their grass-roots support and have not gone beyond the capacities of their volunteer personnel. By growing slowly but resolutely they have avoided causing alarm and repression so that they have carved out at least a space of tolerance for themselves within a society.

Especially important has been the formation of national and continental federations or other forms of coalitions for purposes of guaranteeing greater support from governments and other agencies. Federations can also maintain a secretariat that provides training, assistance in planning, help in research and evaluation, a series of publications that consolidate their cultural identity and special support when any one member is facing a crisis.

E) The Personal Commitment of Researchers to a Process of Democratisation of Communication

Researchers who come from a strongly academic university background often have a problem in contributing to this process of gradual growth. Those with a more radical background may perceive these movements which

move slowly and cautiously as not really committed to social change. They may fail to see how alternative it really is. On the other hand, if they come with a functionalist perspective, they may fail to see this as part of a long-term process of structural change. These latter researchers are likely to be satisfied with fairly superficial administrative and technical recommendations.

Too often, researchers of both radical and conservative tendencies tend to see a research project as just one more contract. They do not have the patience to commit themselves to a process of accompanying a particular movement in its long road toward firm establishment of participatory communications.

CONCLUSIONS: ADAPTING COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TO STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The issues of freedom of speech, broader public access to media information, and diversity of opinions expressed in the media have been an integral part of the public philosophies of liberal democracies over the past several centuries. Much communication research has dealt, either directly or indirectly, with the proper implementation of these principles. However, in the last twenty or thirty years, a series of economic, political and socio-cultural changes in many parts of the world have tended to extend the horizons of what is meant by participatory communication in democratic societies. These new concepts of participatory communication were sufficiently explicit and mature by the late 1970s to form the basic framework for the policy recommendations of the UNESCO-sponsored MacBride Commission Report, Many Voices, One World. Indeed, the report introduced and gave a certain legitimacy to the term, "democratisation of communication".

At first sight, many of the emphases of the MacBride Report seem innocuous enough: communication is a basic individual and collective right,

communication media should be decentralised to provide greater direct participation, there should be greater attention to the needs and rights of minorities and less powerful groups, participation in the management and policy making regarding communications is put forward as an ideal, etc.⁴⁶ These recommendations were intended for consideration as a part of national communication policies. In fact, there is little evidence of moves by governments to implement policies of democratisation of communication, even by those governments which apparently supported the move toward an NWICO. The elite groups who are closest to government-level decision making have too much to lose in such a process of democratisation. Instead, most of the initiatives have been taken in local communities, in grass-roots movements and by less powerful minorities--often, the very groups which do not feel that they have a just access to and participation in communication systems. It is not unusual, of course, that the initiative for social change should come from outside the established system of communications. However, the fact that the initiatives are coming from "the grass roots" makes it more difficult for the communication research establishment to contribute to the democratisation of communication.

Many groups working in innovative experiences of participatory communication have a greater need for various forms of social analysis, feasibility studies and evaluations precisely they are moving into uncharted waters. Indeed, one tends to find in people working in "alternative" communications a greater openness to the more speculative, critical academic world. The administrators of conventional systems of media are more likely to be convinced that they have "got it right" and do not need more basic research. In fact, one finds that communication researchers have not been able to provide much direct support to efforts toward democratic communications. This paper has attempted to analyse three aspects of the limitations of communication

research: the lack of an adequate theory of social change and change in communication institutions; the lack of an empirical, operational framework for systematic comparative analysis of experiences of democratic communication; and the difficulty of adapting to an action research strategy which permits researchers to "accompany" groups initiating more democratic communication in their long-term negotiation of social change.

1. Theoretical Limitations in the Critical Research Tradition

Given the goals of social change and change of communication institutions implicit in the efforts toward democratisation of communication, the most helpful conceptual and methodological approaches are likely to come out of the research tradition which is prepared to be consistently critical of a given organisation of communication institutions. However, much research on democratic communication in the critical tradition is caught between a fascination with utopian models which, supposedly, are to be imposed in "deus ex machina" fashion and a preoccupation with social rigidities. Often this research tells us very little about how social change might actually occur within specific social contexts that almost always carry their resistances to social change.

The root of the problem of much critical theory in the field of communications seems to lie, firstly, in an excessive reliance on an organic, monolithic model of societal organisation, and insufficient development of a theory of dialectical social change explaining processes of redistribution of social power and the emergence of participatory institutions. Secondly, there is, in much critical research, an idealistic bias which sees new communication institutions as coming from rationalistic planning outside of the process of social change. Reinforcing this bias is the tendency to analyse communications as powerful media or hegemonic ideologies which have effects regardless of the social context of audience use and various decodings of media.

A dialectical model of societal organisation presupposes that there are, in all societies, tendencies toward the concentration of social power and social rigidities, but also reactive tendencies toward the redistribution of social power and the emergence of more participatory institutions. Communication institutions are seen as an integral part of social organisation. Such a model, emphasising processes of social change, calls attention to the social conditions which are generating alternative structures of communication, new ideologies and media languages, and new uses of communication technology all as part of a broader process of democratisation in a society.

Practitioners, who are negotiating the development of more democratic communication institutions, need the clarification of long-term, utopian models and they must be aware of the social rigidities they are dealing with. But more important is the continual social analysis of the possibilities for change within contexts of social rigidities. The present paper has attempted to outline a conceptual framework which combines four dimensions in the democratisation of communications: 1) continued clarification of normative models grounded in a social philosophy of democratic communication; 2) an analysis of the economic, political and socio-cultural conditions which both demand and support democratic communications; 3) an analysis of the social rigidities, ideologies of power concentration and mechanisms which thwart efforts toward democratic communications; and 4) an analysis of how practitioners negotiate change in the face of social rigidities.

At the level of practical action, the social conditions and the strategies for democratisation of communication can vary immensely. Theories of democratisation of communication must develop a comparative framework for dealing with this complexity and diversity:

An awareness of the very different avenues and forms of democratisation in societies with quite different stages and types of political, economic

cultural development and with very different cultural histories.

- b) A clarification of the meaning of democratisation at different levels of societal organisation: mass, public communication at the national or international level; regional or local communication systems; communication systems within a particular social sector such as labour organisations, particular cultural interest groups, etc.; communication within small communities or face-to-face groups.
- c) An analysis of the very different ways that protagonists of democratic communication negotiate change within the junctures of historical conditions.

All of this calls for a great deal more empirical data describing different expressions of democratic communication in different contexts.

2. A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of the Stages in the Development of Democratic Communications

As was noted above, the slowness of governments in initiating a comprehensive policy of more democratic communication, has prompted many observers to place greater hope for initiatives in the spread of grass-roots movements for participatory communications. The presupposition is that change is more likely to begin at the margins of society among groups which feel that the present system of communications is inadequate. A further presupposition is that these innovative experiences are not just a passing phenomenon, but rather are the beginnings of a new structure of communication or, at least, are establishing permanent alternatives within the established structure of a society's communication system. It is expected that the basic institutional form of more participatory communication will be developed at the local level and that the advantages of this will be demonstrated and that eventually there will be greater acceptance in the larger society. Proponents of this model of change would admit that often, unless there are fairly profound political and economic changes, it is not likely that a whole society would accept a

a thoroughly participatory system of communications. But they would argue that alternative forms of communication are an integral and essential part of the process of political and economic change. Thus, the transition from relatively isolated, idealistic experiments to incorporation into a national system of communications is becoming a concern among some research on democratic communication.⁴⁷ Is such a transition possible or likely in the face of social rigidities, and, if so, how does it occur? To analyse what permits grass-roots initiatives to grow and survive, we must look at a longer-term historical, comparative analysis of many such experiences.

The present paper analysed briefly a sample of the more complete historical descriptions of attempts to introduce alternative communication systems which permitted greater access and participation to "disenfranchised" groups. There were varying degrees of "success" in the cases, and all of them left some permanent institutional changes in the communication systems of the countries where they have occurred or are occurring. But generally the results were more pessimistic than many idealistic protagonists of democratic communication would like to expect.

What the analyses did reveal was a kind of natural history and a series of typical stages: 1) a new cultural expression at a local, spontaneous communal level; 2) adaptation of this communal expression to a medium, linking similar groups in a larger communication system; 3) once the alternative begins to attract a larger following and broader cultural significance, imitation, competition and co-optation by established non-democratic media systems; 4) the transformation of the new cultural expression into a mass popular format, "marketable" in a pluralistic national or international society.

The value of a more systematic framework in terms of natural history stages is that it reveals not only the complex and often hidden way that

structural restraints present themselves at each stage, but also the inherent weaknesses of some idealistic movements in responding to these restraints. The analysis in terms of stages also shows the problems inherent in the transitions, for example, the move from an "alternative" communication to acceptance among a broader, more pluralistic public with the greater public responsibilities that this entails. The natural history method also indicates that as a direct communal cultural expression moves through various stages of communication through a medium, it has to rethink what is meant by participation. The analysis of stages groups together a series of interrelated problems which can be studied as interacting variables. Finally, this analysis suggests the administrative and planning steps that are necessary if the innovation is to be successful in the transition. Or it may suggest that the experience remain simply an alternative for a more restricted group.

The analytic framework presented here may have the disadvantage of projecting too pessimistic a process. The "successes" are often too negotiated, gradual and partial to attract attention as "truly participatory". However, this framework can be modified as additional empirical cases are studied.

3. The Need for New Strategies of Research In Support of More Democratic Communication

Research is more than just a body of theory and systematic methodologies for collecting data to test theory. It is also an institutionalised professional establishment with its specialised organisation, career ideals and accepted modes of operation or strategies. Many of the conventions of communication research, borrowed from older scientific traditions, need to be adapted if research is to make contact with efforts toward democratic communication. Three areas of adaptation seem particularly important:

- 1) a different understanding of the objectives and procedures of communication,

- 2) a different relationship between the researcher and the host group, and
- 3) a different understanding of professional research organisation and research careers.

Objectives and Procedures in Research on Democratic Communication

Since, in participatory organisations, those who need information for decision-making are the media users themselves, the primary objective of research is to increase the users' understanding of their cultural expression and their communication patterns so that they can determine more consciously what kind of culture they want to create and how they want to structure the use of media. The most adequate model of research is not that of the physical sciences where the subjects are not creators of culture but fields of force or variables which can be isolated for purposes of prediction and external control. Here "prediction and control" is greater individual and collective self-understanding and greater freedom in self-determination. A much better starting point is that of the humanistic or cultural sciences where the method is interpretation of meanings being created. The researcher becomes a participant observer in an attempt to recreate the meanings from the point of view of the actors. However, in this case the objective is not to draw up an external ethnographic model of the culture that can be reflected back to the group, but rather to help the group itself become aware of the culture they are creating and the role of a particular communication or media "language" in the creation of this culture. The group can then judge whether this culture is the richest expression of their own values, symbols and myths or whether there are deeper resources of the human imagination in this historical tradition not being expressed. This method is closer to the "concientization" suggested by Paulo Freire. This does not rule out quantitative survey or personality measurements of the behavioural sciences or external ethnographic description. But, in this case, the systematic

analysis of cultural histories within a given political-economic context is more "objective" precisely because it can bring in more of the subjective intentionality (the world we want to create) than external observation. The subjective experience of cultural symbols and myths become part of the data for critical appreciation.

The Relationship of the Host Group and the Researcher

The researcher does bring "from the outside" tools of socio-cultural interpretation, and the researcher does not (perhaps, ideally, should not) share totally the same cultural history as the host group. Like the psychoanalyst, the research should have already had the experience of conscious reflection on the ideologies and myths of his or her culture in order to lead (not direct) the host group in their own reflection. But the researcher must also share deeply and sympathetically the alienation and cultural goals of the host group. The researcher is also learning and experiencing the "liberation" of which Freire speaks.⁴⁸ The researcher necessarily brings the knowledge of a different technical sphere, but he or she follows the leadership of the group and translates this technical knowledge into the "language" and goals of the group.

The Understanding of Professional Research Organisation and Research Careers

For various reasons, the researcher must define the pace of research not simply in terms of the timing of a contract or development of a scientific field (or professional career), but according to the rhythm of the group itself. The process of self-awareness follows, as Illich notes, the pace of the "educable moment". Also, the host group is negotiating social change in the face of structural restraints and must be constantly analysing the social process to determine the opportune moment for more participatory organisation. The research organization must be ready to accompany the host group in its journey and be ready to respond to the

the needs of the group as they arise.

All this implies a somewhat different career ideal for communication researchers, at least those who wish to be associated with the democratisation of communication. This research will undoubtedly bring a mere intimate comparative knowledge of the immensely varied processes of democratisation of communication, and this knowledge can be shared with professional colleagues. But the measure of "success" may not be the creation of external explanatory models which can be used by the masters of a society to make the media more effective. Rather, the norm is greater understanding within the host groups and is likely to be in the subjective intentional order: the experience of greater authenticity, integration and human satisfaction in cultural creation and in the communication of this culture. Only the protagonists of democratic communication can be the judge of this.

Footnotes

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- ³³ Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo. Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977). Simon Frith. The Sociology of Rock. (London: Constable and Company, Ltd. 1978).
- ³⁴ Wallis and Malm. Big Sounds from Small Peoples, 1984.
- ³⁵ Todd Gitlin. The Whole World is Watching. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980).
- ³⁶ Willard Rowland. "The Illusion of Fulfillment: The Broadcast Reform Movement", Journalism Monographs, No. 79, December, 1982.
- ³⁷ Frances Berrigan. Access: Some Western Models of Community Media. (Paris: UNESCO, 1977).
- ³⁸ See special issue of Media Development, Vol. 1980/2, on popular communication in Latin America.
- ³⁹ Fernando Reyes Matta, "La Comunicación Alternativa Como Respuesta Democrática", in Comunicación y Democracia, ed. by Elizabeth Fox, Hector Schmucler, et al. (Lima, Peru: Desco, 1982), pp. 245-264.
- ⁴⁰ Wallis and Malm, Big Sounds from Small Peoples, 1984, pp. 297-302.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 120-131.
- ⁴² Todd Gitlin. The Whole World is Watching. 1980.
- ⁴³ Wallis and Malm, Big Sounds from Small Peoples, 1984, pp. 124-131.

⁴⁴Chapple and Garofalo, Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay, 1977

⁴⁵Dan Schiller, Objectivity, 1981

⁴⁶Many Voices, One World, pp. 265-267.

⁴⁷Fernando Reyes Matta, "La Comunicación alternativa como respuesta Democrática", Comunicación y Democracia en América Latina. Ed. by Elizabeth Fox, Hector Schmucler, et al. Lima Peru: DESCO, 1982.

Various articles in this book document the resistance to efforts toward democratisation of communication at the governmental level but also the problems of moving isolated experiences of alternative communication to a broader societal level.

⁴⁸Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin, 1980.

